

LATIN NOTES

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Address communications to FRANCES E. SABIN, Director of the Bureau

Issued in the interests of teachers of secondary Latin and Greek

Associate Editors: MILDRED DEAN, HARRY WEDECK, CLAIRE THURSBY, MARY R. STARK, MARK HUTCHINSON, LILLIAN LAWLER

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No. 4

A LETTER AND A REPLY

My dear Miss Sabin:

Many articles are appearing on the subject of teaching Latin in which some writers use terms as synonymous and others do not. The confusion that is arising in the minds of many is more damaging to the cause than the attacks of the foe. If an article could be written for LATIN NOTES or THE CLASSICAL JOURNAL giving a definition of these different terms, I believe the atmosphere would be clarified.

1. Just what is meant by the "formal," "functional," "direct," "reading," "eclectic" method?
2. Does "formal" method mean the grammar-translation method?
3. Are "formal" and "functional" synonymous terms or not?
4. What is the status of the reading-method used in the preparatory schools at Ohio State University and the University of Chicago?
5. Does not the reading-method obliterate many of the values claimed for Latin, especially in the first two years?
6. Why should translations not be "regarded as an objective"?
7. Does the phrase "power to read" include translation as well as comprehension?
8. What method is favored in English schools?

Most sincerely yours,

MRS. L. T. SMITH

Dec. 15, 1935

330 Webster Ave., Chicago, Ill.

My dear Mrs. Smith:

Miss Sabin has referred to me for answer your letter of December 15. I suspect that she did so because I have long been urging the use of functional methods in our Latin classrooms and also because I have written some articles dealing with the direct reading of Latin.

Permit me to answer at once your third question by saying that the terms "functional" and "formal" are *not* synonymous. They are, as I understand them, direct opposites. When you teach a pupil any given knowledge, ability or skill through its *use* in its natural setting, you are employing a *functional* method; when you teach him any given knowledge, ability or skill apart from its use or its natural setting and as a thing in itself, you are employing a *formal* method. For example, having a pupil learn the meaning of a Latin word through meeting it once or several times in sensible sentence context is a *functional* method; having him learn it in a lesson vocabulary in advance of meeting it in sensible sentence context is a *formal* method. Similarly, having a pupil learn a grammatical form by meeting it once or several times in a sensible sentence context is a *functional* method; having him learn a set of forms or even a single form in advance of meeting it in sensible sentence context is a *formal* method.

I should add that a good many teachers who prefer the *functional* approach to the learning of the various elements which enter into the admittedly complex ability to "read" Latin, still

justify a considerable amount of *formal* drill in some or all of these elements, but only after the *functional* approach and more or less *functional* practice has motivated the supplemental *formal* drill.

Perhaps I can illustrate what I mean by taking an example from the realm of sports. Suppose a boy decides that he wants to learn the game of tennis. What would you do first? Wouldn't you take him to a tennis court and put a racket in his hands, even at the risk of having him drive the ball into the net many times and knock it out of the lot many more? Or would you insist that he must first practice in a gymnasium or in the back yard until he achieves a hundred-percent mastery in driving the ball within a given space just over a given line on the gymnasium wall or on the back fence? The *formal* approach just suggested *might* result in producing a tennis champion, but it probably would quite successfully drive the young aspirant to elect some other subject in the sports curriculum. The time might come when the boy himself saw the need for just such perfection of skill and would then be willing to subject himself to long hours of practice in some such *formal* fashion. But this latter type of drill, however *formal*, would then possess vitality and validity because it had been motivated by the *functional* approach, that is, by actual experience with the game as it is played.

Or suppose a girl shows an interest in learning to play the piano. Would you first give her long hours of practice on finger exercises, or would you encourage her interest by having her begin with some one of the modern music books, like "The Melody Way," or "Tiny Tunes for Tiny Tots"? Wouldn't you, in other words, let intensive practice on specific skills and perfection of technique await a natural motivation through a *functional* approach? Some of us can testify to what the *formal* approach to the study of music did for us.

The perfectly defensible idea of education as the process by which a pupil is led from where he is to where we think he ought to be is certainly applicable to interests and attitudes as well as to knowledges and skills. Now what are some of the dominant interests and attitudes of the boys and girls who take up the study of Latin or might profitably do so? These interests will, of course, be many and varied. However, one of the most important sources of interest for the average pupil is to be found in the use of the Latin language itself—in the pupil's desire to find out how the Romans said things, and to try himself to do as the Romans did. Strangely enough, many teachers of beginners' Latin fail to make any adequate effort to satisfy this perfectly natural curiosity on the part of their pupils, and in far too many instances the pupil's budding interest in Latin as a language is killed by the teacher's interest in facts about the language. When the pupil asks for the bread of living speech, he is given a stone of grammar and syntax.

The teacher's first task, as I see it, is to strengthen the pupil's natural interest in Latin as a language, and to create and min-

ister to his interest in Latin as a science only as rapidly as the need becomes apparent; that is, only when and if the formulation and naming of grammatical principles and the gathering up into paradigms of stray grammatical forms will result in desirable clarification of the pupil's ideas and in his increased power to read and understand the printed Latin page.

But some one will say that pupils are or can easily be interested in the rote learning of paradigms, technical terms and rules, and word lists. It is true that they can be so interested, and there are in use many effective devices, such as "baseball games" and other forms of artificial motivation based on competition or rewards; but the fact remains that this type of motivation is artificial and external instead of vital and convincing. Interest must be intrinsic and not extrinsic, if it is to last. Furthermore, this sort of artificial motivation is usually applicable only to the more *formal* phases of the study of Latin. If, therefore, it bulks too large or is brought into the course at too early a stage, it is sure to produce in the pupil an attitude toward Latin that makes it all but impossible for him to think of it as a language, that is, as primarily a vehicle of thought the printed words of which are arranged in horizontal lines from left to right and not in vertical columns. Furthermore, the question is rarely raised in *formal* drills of this sort as to whether the various forms of the particular noun being declined or the verb being conjugated could ever be used in a sensible sentence. As a matter of fact, many of the forms of specimen words used in textbooks and in classroom practice to exemplify the various declensions and conjugations could not possibly be used in sensible sentences. In a classroom where a pupil is allowed or required to write in synopsis or conjugation drill such a verb phrase as *interfectus sum*, Latin is not merely dead—it has been murdered.

And the "exercises for translation" which usually accompany the drill materials in forms and syntax being "learned" in this *formal* fashion do not help much to create in the pupil the idea that a "sentence" etymologically and everywhere outside a drill book in a foreign language means a *thought*.

It must be admitted that the *functional* approach takes time and that the early results when measured by *formal* tests and standards often seem meager. This apparent lack of results sometimes creates a situation which is a bit hard on parents. Recently a father of a high school boy, who knew nothing of my own attitude on the question of method, was complaining to me that his son had studied Latin for a month and didn't yet know what a genitive was. I asked the father if he did, and he promptly answered "You bet I do. It's the second one down from the top." Just so.

In this rather long discussion of the *functional* as compared with the *formal* method I have touched on several other points raised in your letter and I find that I have practically answered your second question in the affirmative. For a grammar-translation method or a grammar-vocabulary-translation method, at least as I understand those terms, necessarily employs a *formal* approach. On the other hand, a translation-grammar method or a translation-vocabulary method would demand a *functional* approach. Likewise, a reading-grammar method would be *functional* in approach. For while differences in procedure between the translation method and the reading method are very great, still they are both *functional* methods, because by either method emphasis is placed on getting meaning from the printed page, while facts about the language are placed in a secondary position and are valued only in so far as they are believed to contribute to ability to get meaning from the printed page.

Now let me cover your first question by giving you what I consider a fairly accurate description of each of the commonly discussed general methods of teaching Latin.

To be continued in the February issue.

A WEEK AT THE SERVICE BUREAU FOR CLASSICAL TEACHERS (NOVEMBER 6-13)

An inadequate list of activities published in the way of information for the friends who often ask for details of the organization and activities of a Bureau designed to serve the interests of teachers in the secondary schools of the country.

A. LETTERS FOR THE DIRECTOR TO ANSWER

1. From Riga, Latvia (Russia): A man who has Gray's "The Teaching of Latin" wants this information:

- 1) What elementary textbook following this text is the best?
- 2) What are the best tests?
- 3) Is there a functional Latin grammar for reading?

2. From a teacher: Send me all the information you have on Leif Ericson, the discoverer of America.

3. From a pupil: Please send me information about Roman prisons, slavery, and newspapers. Also I want to know all about American prisons.

4. Please tell me why if "patrimony" means inherited wealth from a father, "matrimony" does not mean money inherited from a mother?

5. A 15-year-old boy from a Latin class sends a short Latin play for which he has written music. His teacher wants to know if it can be copyrighted and sold.

6. A Catholic brother who is teaching Latin wants answers to four important questions at the basis of successful teaching of Latin along the newer lines. (A two-page letter required as an answer.)

7. A teacher in a southern state wants to know the history of the teaching of Latin, also the claim put forth as to its values.

8. A teacher outlines a very clever procedure for the entertainment of boys and girls in a Latin Club.

9. An enthusiastic scholar and teacher sends a fascinating bulletin prepared in his school which sets forth a valuable plan for interesting Latin pupils in words. Wants a reply.

10. A letter received by a state chairman, containing a criticism of the SERVICE BUREAU for failure to attend to three letters (in two of which money had been enclosed) was forwarded to the BUREAU. This striking example of "Lost Mail" demanded an immediate and sympathetic response.

11. A Latin Leaflet published by the Latin Department of a southern university will be used as a guide for the material dealing with the teaching of Latin which will be incorporated in the new revision of the curriculum for the state. This is a piece of good fortune which should bring a letter of congratulation from the BUREAU.

12. A Horatian play was sent from one state center. Two translations of Epodes of Horace were received from another state, together with translations from the Greek of Alcaeus. Reviews necessary before replying.

13. A college instructor wants help at once in preparing an Exhibit of Horatian material.

14. A Latin teacher asks how to pronounce short o in Latin. She has three textbooks by leading Latin instructors in which the answer is given, but they are different. Which is right? Also, she wishes to know what punctuation marks the Romans used.

15. Several letters came containing notices of valuable material in which the BUREAU might be interested.

16. Address wanted of a firm which could furnish a plaster cast of Horace.

17. A leading professor is about to publish a book. He wants to know what books have titles containing classical allusions.

B. CALLERS

1. A prominent Major in the American Army who went through the World War has put in modern form the commands issued by Caesar in a battle with the Helvetians. Any soldier of today can understand them at once. He leaves this as a contribution to the files of the BUREAU or for printing in LATIN NOTES.

2. An agent from a leading printing firm is ready to give an estimate of the cost of printing some of the SERVICE BUREAU Bulletins.

3. A class of fifteen adults who are studying Latin in one of the city projects comes in the afternoon for a lantern talk and for a general examination of the SERVICE BUREAU material. (We often have three groups of pupils in a week; size ranging from fifteen to forty or more.)

4. Other callers who have in mind some special points for observation and study come at various times during the week.

C. MEETINGS

On the second Saturday of each month (November, in this case) a Committee entitled "The Inner Circle" meets for two hours at the BUREAU. It is made up of officers of the AMERICAN CLASSICAL LEAGUE and seven leading teachers of Latin in New York City. The purpose is to assist the LEAGUE and its SERVICE BUREAU in keeping in touch with the needs of the schools and colleges and to profit in the way of cooperation.

D. EDITORIAL DUTIES

The Director of the BUREAU should not consider the above a fair statement of her activities of the past few days without mentioning the hours spent in planning new material, and in selecting and putting in order for the printer the contents of the next issue of LATIN NOTES, by no means an easy task.

E. IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES OF THE STAFF

1. The order clerk has received, roughly speaking, aside from membership blanks, at least 75 letters per day containing inquiries, orders for SERVICE BUREAU material or payment for past consignments, each one to be carefully checked and in the case of an order, billed and sent by mail. Research in the files is often necessary. Payments for past orders must also be duly recorded. There is constant need, too, of revision of material and cooperation with the Director in preparing new items.

2. Another member of the staff has made up about eight packages of material to be sent to various classical meetings around the country for exhibition and sale. To select the items likely to prove of most value calls for much thought. In addition, she has the oversight of four artists who are making copies of interesting wall charts for visiting pupils and teachers to see. Her attention to visitors also adds much to her activities.

3. A full-time stenographer has been engaged in writing the many letters dictated to her, preparing the bank account, sending out bills for collection, and occasionally copying material of importance.

4. A young man spends the hours in the endless task of checking up subscriptions, sending out notices to those who have not yet forwarded the dollar for the dues, and multigraphing the manuscripts which have been selected for circulation after inclusion in the LATIN NOTES list of Material Available.

5. One of the instructors in the Department of Classics has spent half of her time in the organization of the Latin Chairmen in the various states, a project which has called for intensive thought and much correspondence.

F. INTERESTING PACKAGES have been received containing new books contributed by the publishers to the Exhibit Table—several of which have been of unique interest and have called for examination in some detail.

A WELL-KNOWN WRITER SPEAKS

"We expect too much, however, from the teachers of English in American colleges. They have had to shoulder a great part of that burden of accurate learning in the mother tongue which was formerly carried by means of daily drill in translating Greek and Latin. Year after year in the Harvard Graduate School, I used to notice that the best writers were the Canadians who had kept up their classics. No boy well trained in Latin or Greek composition ever found difficulty in expressing himself clearly in English. It was hoped that drill in the modern languages would ultimately supply the discipline once given by the classics, but thus far the results are disappointing."

Quoted from BLISS PERRY's book,

AND GLADLY TEACH, pp. 254-5, 1935

A LATIN CLUB PROJECT

Worked out in the High School at Peru, Nebraska, and described in an article sent to the CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR. It is reprinted in LATIN NOTES with the permission of the Christian Science Publishing Society.

Peru, Neb.

The Latin Club was having difficulty in planning its year's program. The September meeting, a picnic lunch in Jefferson Park, was now in session.

Between bites, the president said to Miss Hall, their sponsor, "I feel we should decide upon one major project and center upon it each month's activities."

"Something that would show the other students and the public the value of Latin," the club secretary said.

"And something that would take us out-of-doors," Bob Jones, a member, added.

The Idea Hit Them

The students laughed at the impossibility of this and then fell silent. After several moments the president pointed to an evergreen near by. "What sort of tree is that, Miss Hill?"

"An arbor vitae," she answered, translating—"tree of life."

"In other parks, trees and flowers are labeled," the secretary murmured.

The members of the club started. The idea had struck them.

"Why, we could mark the trees in our park here," Bob Jones almost shouted.

"And later the shrubs and plants," another member added. "I always did want to know the why of clematis *paniculata*."

Plans were soon made. Nursery catalogues which gave the botanical names were ransacked. Small durable markers were a necessity. After hearing an explanation of the desirability of labeling trees and shrubs, the city park board agreed to provide a generous supply of tags.

Opportunity For Correlation

The Latin Club, armed with botanies, shrubbery catalogues, and plant acquisition lists of the park board, began the work of marking. Latin students who were also botany students found an opportunity for correlation in the work of identification.

In October, late flowering plants were tagged, the English as well as the Latin name (with translation if it increased interest in the plant) being written plainly on the marker.

In November the tall, deciduous shade trees of the park were identified and marked. In December, the *Pinus nigra*, the *Pinus resinosa*, the *Pinus canadensis*, *glauca*, *alba*, and other evergreens.

In January and February came the labeling of the wild plum and other treelike shrubs, and in March, the lower shrubs. And with what delight did the students distinguish *Forsythia spectabilis* from *Forsythia suspensa* and *Tamarix hispida* from the *caspiensis*!

In April, the iris *longipetala*, *tripetala*, *reticulata*, and similar plants were marked. And in May, flowering annuals and perennials, such as *Alyssum argenteum*, *Phlox subulata*, and *Coxcomb plumosa*.

J. C. B.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The booklet containing the three translations from Horace which received first, second, and third rank in college and the three in high schools, printed by Silver, Burdett, and Company, of Newark, New Jersey, is now available. This is sent out free of charge by the publisher.

The Bayard Press, publisher of WHAT ROME HAS LEFT US, is located at Williamsport, Pa.

The Dean of Georgetown University at Washington, D. C., writes that a Horace Medal (as large as the Vergilian) has been made and is awarded annually to the student of the college of Arts and Sciences who attains the highest average in an oral examination in twenty selected Odes of Horace, and who submits the best metrical translation of two of these Odes.

A striking wall poster, designed for use in an Exhibit of Horatian material or as a notice of a meeting, has been contributed by the American Book Company who will forward it upon request from the office at Cincinnati, Ohio, or New York City.

Extra copies of the December CLASSICAL JOURNAL devoted to the Horace Celebration, may be secured for 35 cents by writing to the Secretary-Treasurer, F. S. Dunham, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

The Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, have reduced the price of E. K. Rand's "A WALK TO HORACE'S FARM" from \$1.50 to 50 cents until February 15.

Very beautiful photographs taken on the Horatian Cruise have been sent to the SERVICE BUREAU by Miss Georgia First, Rock Island, Illinois; also by Miss Verena Deuel, Tarrytown, New York; Mr. Henry Wilt, Westhampton Beach, Long Island; Miss Loura Woodruff, Oak Park, Illinois; Miss Ruth Good-year, Fanwood, New Jersey; and Miss Lucy Prescott, Abraham Lincoln High School, Brooklyn, New York.

LEAGUE NOTICES

Since last month two more names have been added to the list of Chairmen who will represent the AMERICAN CLASSICAL LEAGUE in their states. They are:

FLORIDA—Mrs. Louise Rogers, Senior High School, Orlando

GEORGIA—Miss Julianne A. Roller, Franklin High School, Portland

Teachers in these states will now have the opportunity to cooperate with the Chairmen in the matter of sending in to them names of people who can speak on some phase of the classics at school assemblies or other meetings.

Attention is again called to the fact that THE AMERICAN CLASSICAL LEAGUE is willing to help the teacher with material to answer criticisms about the value of the Classics in the schools of today.

Miss Julia Bentley, of the high school at Cincinnati, Ohio, has accepted the Chairmanship of the Committee on Life Memberships.

SERVICE BUREAU MATERIAL AVAILABLE

Mimeographs may be purchased for 5 cents each, unless another price is stated. Printed items, however, known as **LATIN NOTES SUPPLEMENTS** and **BULLETINS**, must be purchased at the prices indicated. The material up to January first, 1935, has been listed in a printed **CATALOGUE** which is sold for 15 cents, or 20 if postage is required.

I. In Mimeographed Form

525. Forerunners of the Red Cross in the Roman Army. By Sister M. Inviolata Barry, Our Lady of the Lake College for Women, San Antonio, Tex.
526. A Latin Test Given at the End of the First Six Weeks in a First Year Class at Hunter College High School, New York, N. Y. (Based upon chapters 1-16 in **LATIN FOR TODAY** by Gray and Jenkins). By Augusta Silberschutz.
527. The Values of Latin — Some Points for Consideration by High School Pupils. Sent to parents and pupils in the Classical High School, Providence, R. I.
528. A Mid-term Test for a Vergil Class. By Lillian Corrigan, Hunter College High School, New York, N. Y.

II. Latin Notes Supplements

LII. Page References for Topics Dealing with Roman Private Life. Price 15 cents. For Supplements I-LI, see **CATALOGUE**.

III. Bulletins

Bulletins I, II, and III are out of print. For a list of the others, see the **CATALOGUE**.

ADVERTISEMENTS

LATIN SONGS, NEW AND OLD

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An attractive booklet for those who are interested in the teaching of origins of English words

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The Editor deeply regrets her mistake in giving \$1.00 as the price in the December issue

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Prices: 1, 60 cents; 2, 35 cents; 3, 65 cents; 4, 35 cents; 5, 25 cents
Seton Hall College, South Orange, N. J.

EDITOR'S NOTE: PRICE OF THESE ADVERTISEMENTS IS
\$2.00 EACH